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DEPARTMENT FOR WHA DAS JACOBSON, MEXICO OFFICE DIRECTOR  
LEE, D STAFF CUE, AND INL HOHMAN. NSC FOR O'REILLY.

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [UN](#) [MX](#)  
SUBJECT: NEW MEXICAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION PRESIDENT  
PLEDGES MODEST CHANGES

REF: MEXICO 3627

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Raul Plascencia Villanueva at his inauguration ceremony November 17 as the new President of Mexico's National Human Rights Commission (CNDH) pledged changes that would strengthen the organization's ability to promote greater human rights respect. During the ceremony, Plascencia announced that he wanted to make CNDH recommendations legally binding upon all government agencies. The following day, he told Poloffs that he also plans to work more closely with the NGO community. (Note: His predecessor, Jose Luis Soberanes, had a notoriously bad relationship with the human rights NGO community. End Note.) Analysts, however, question whether he will show the courage to take a strong hand on human rights with serious political overtones. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) Raul Plascencia Villanueva pledged modest changes at his inauguration ceremony November 17 as the new President of Mexico's National Human Rights Commission (CNDH). Before a large number of well-wishers from the human rights community, Plascencia said that he would work to make CNDH recommendations legally binding upon all government entities. The NGO community repeatedly has voiced its displeasure with the current system in which government agencies are not obligated to implement CNDH recommendations. In a cautious move, Plascencia also announced the creation of a new kidnapping unit. The unit was created in response to the high number of kidnappings over the past several years but some analysts question the relevance of the unit to human rights abuses by government authorities. In a follow-up meeting with Poloffs November 18, Plascencia continued his cautious stance by not offering more ambitious proposals for reform. He said, however, that he would endeavor to work more closely with the NGO community than his controversial predecessor, Jose Luis Soberanes.

¶3. (U) CNDH is composed of five major offices: 1) the Presidency, 2) a Consultative Council and its 3) Technical Secretariat, 4) an Executive Secretariat, and 5) Five Substantive Divisions or "Visitorships." Of these offices, the most important are the Consultative Council, which consists of ten academics appointed by the Senate who are responsible for establishing CNDH guidelines, approving internal rules and overseeing the budget (the CNDH President serves as head of the Council), and the five Visitorships which cover the following areas.

-- First Visitor: Disappearances; women, children and family

issues; attention to crime victims; HIV; and the new kidnappings unit;

-- Second Visitor: conduct of authorities in federal institutions;

-- Third Visitor: prison system conditions;

-- Fourth Visitor: indigenous affairs;

-- Fifth Visitor: treatment of journalists and migrants and trafficking in persons.

Plascencia appointed the following five new Visitors:

-- First Visitor: Dr. Luis Garcia Lopez Guerrero. Garcia served as Technical Secretary of CNDH's Consultative Council prior to his assignment as the First Visitor. He was a law professor at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), including a member of its investigation center, as well as law professor at the Autonomous University of Yucatan, Iberoamericana University, La Salle University, among others. He has written several books including one on Mexican penal law. He holds a Bachelor's, Master's, and Ph.D. in law from UNAM.

-- Second Visitor: Dr. Luciano Silva Ramirez. Silva is member of the National System of Investigators and has written several articles on constitutional law. He holds a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science and Public Administration from the Autonomous University of Nuevo Leon, a

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Master's Degree from the University of Ortega y Gasset in Madrid, Spain, and a Ph.D. in Political Science and Sociology from the Complutense University of Madrid.

-- Third Visitor: Daniel Romero. Romero is the former president of the Maquila Industry trade association, and Honorary Consul of Japan. He was suggested for this position by PRI Senators Manlio Fabio Beltrones and Fernando Castro. Romero is a lawyer by profession and also has served as Public Prosecutor.

-- Fourth Visitor: Teresa Paniagua Jimenez. Prior to her assignment as the Fourth Visitor, Paniagua served as Deputy Director in the Liaison Unit of Information in the Chamber of Deputies. She also served as the Press Director in the Agrarian Reform Secretariat. Prior she worked as a journalist and, in 1987, received the National Journalism Award. Paniagua is a lawyer by profession.

-- Fifth Visitor: Fernando Batista. Batista has held different positions within CNDH including Fourth Visitor and Director of the Victims of Crime Program. He has given classes in human rights at different universities. Batista holds a Bachelor's Degree in Law from the Technological Autonomous Institute of Mexico (ITAM). He studied Judicial Policy at Harvard University and earned a Master's Degree in Legal Sciences from the Navarra University of Spain.

14. (SBU) Comment: During the meeting with Poloffs, Plascencia promised to work more closely with the NGO community. As the Ambassador meets with the human rights community, we have encouraged those groups to work more collaboratively with Plascencia and CNDH. Plascencia also has pledged a number of reforms including an initiative to strengthen CNDH's ability to enforce its recommendations, which will require Congressional approval. This would help assuage the Commission's harshest critics, some of whom indicated in the last NGO meeting with the Ambassador in November (reftel) that the organization lacks the political will to realize its full powers. Human rights organizations question Plascencia's fortitude, however, because he essentially secured his election with the backing of leaders from the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) and National

Action Party (PAN). Former senior CNDH advisor Javier Montezuma knows Plascencia and believes him to be very cautious about criticizing powerful political players particularly in view of the fact that CNDH relies on Congress for its funding. End Comment.

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